(b) if so, the action being taken against this organization; and

(c) the details regarding number of SIMI activists arrested and the quantum of property seized till now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (c) Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) is an organization banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967. There has been no evidence of the involvement of SIMI in the attack on Ram Janam Bhoomi-Babri Masjid Complex at Ayodhya so far. No activist of SIMI has been arrested or property seized in this connection.

Negotiations on tariff concessions

1818. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is undertaking negotiations with Bangladesh and Pakistan on exchange of tariff concessions in the run-up to the SAFTA agreement for SAARC countries that is scheduled to come into operation from January, 2006;

(b) if so, what will be the status of the existing bilateral trade freebies that India has with Nepal and Bhutan;

(c) whether it is a fact that Indian Government officials attended a meeting in Kathmandu from July 20 to 22 for negotiations on the proposed SAFTA with officials from other SAARC countries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) South Asian Free Trade Area Agreement (SAFTA) is scheduled to come into force with effect from 1.1.2006. Under SAFTA a phased tariff liberalization programme is envisaged. In 2 years, non-Least Developed Contracting States (India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) will bring down tariffs to 20%, while Least Developed Contracting States (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal) will bring them down to 30%. Non-LDCS will then bring down tariffs from 20% to 0-5% in 5 years, while LDCS will do so in 8 years. Moreover, non-LDCS will reduce their tariffs for LDC products on 0-5% in 3 years.

SAFTA is expected to be fully operationalized by 2016. A Committee of Experts on SAFTA (COE), consisting of delegates from all SAARC countries, is currently negotiating on the four outstanding issues pertaining to SAFTA, namely (1) Rules of Origin, (2) Sensitive List (3) Mechanism for Compensation of Revenue loss for the Least Developed Contracting States (LDCS) (MCRL) and (4) Technical Assistance to LDCS (Technical Assistance) for finalizing the same for smooth implementation of SAFTA on the stipulated date. On the Indicative Sensitive Lists circulated by all SAARC countries, India has been holding bilateral discussions with each SAARC country, including Bangladesh and Pakistan, on the sidelines of the COE Meetings.

(b) The existing bilateral trade agreements with Nepal and Bhutan will continue to be in force even after implementation of SAFTA.

(c) Yes Sir.

(d) The Ninth Meeting of the COE was held in Kathmandu on July 20-22, 2005 in which delegates from all SAARC member countries participated which included delegates from India as well. The Committee held detailed discussions on all the four issues which are briefly indicated below:

(1) **SAFTA Rules of Origin**—A proposal on Operational Certification Procedures (OCP) for smooth implementation of SAFTA Rules of Origin prepared by India was considered by the Sub-Group on the side lines of the Ninth COE Meeting and a substantial part of its text finalized. The COE urged the Sub-Group on SAFTA Rules of Origin to arrive at a consensus on outstanding issues with a view to finalizing the text of the DRAFT SAFTA Rules of Origin and Operational Certification Procedures at its next meeting.

(2) **Bilateral Negotiations on indicative sensitive lists**—Bilateral negotiations were held during the Meeting on Sensitive Lists and agreed to finalize these at its Tenth Meeting. The COE reiterated its decision that each Member State would prepare one Sensitive list containing not more than 20% of Tariff lines at 6-digit for the purpose of negotiations with flexibility for Least Developed Member States to submit longer indicative lists; the final sensitive list of each Contracting State would comprise two lists *i.e.* one for LDC States and the other for Non-LDC States.

(3) **MCRL**—Negotiations were held between the Non-Least Developed Contracting States and Least Developed Contracting States on the mechanism for compensation of revenue loss and it is expected to be further discussed during the next meeting of COE.

(4) **Technical Assistance**—The Committee agreed that in the next meeting, the Sub-Group on Technical Assistance would finalize the operational modalities for providing technical assistance to LDCs.

Overlapping in function of private security agencies and police

1819. SHRI R.K. ANAND:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY:
SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been instances of overlap of function between private security personnel and the police;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that private multi-national security agencies having branches in India pose serious security implications; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Security to individuals as well as property is provided both by the Police as well as personnel of the Private security agencies.

(c) and (d) In view of the possible security implications of personnel of multi-national Private Security Agencies operating in India and to ensure that the private security agencies function within the realm of law of the country and act in a manner which is not prejudicial to national security, the Central Government has enacted a law namely "The Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act, 2005". The Act, *inter-alia*, provides the necessary legal framework to oversee their functioning including cancellation of licence of such private security agencies if the licence holder has done any act which poses a threat to national security.